



SEN. JIM HORN

41st DISTRICT



REP. IDA BALLASIOTES

1997 SESSION REPORT



REP. MIKE WENSMAN

Dear friends and neighbors,

The 105-day session adjourned on schedule, the first time a budget session has not gone into overtime in 40 years.

During the 105 days, we passed a budget well below the state spending limit imposed by Initiative 601 that does not create any “bow waves” forcing future program cuts or tax increases. We approved tax cuts totaling \$414 million. We provided \$600 million for enhancements in K-12 and higher education. We ended the failed welfare entitlement program and replaced it with a compassionate program based on personal responsibility and personal dignity. Finally, we put justice back into the juvenile justice system.

If you have any questions on any issue we dealt with this session, please contact us. We will be happy to help. It is our pleasure and privilege to represent you.

Sincerely,

Sen. Jim Horn
Rep. Ida Ballasiotes
Rep. Mike Wensman

STATE BUDGET MEETS COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION

As vice chair of the House Appropriations Committee, Mike worked on the House side to ensure that the state keeps its constitutional obligation “to make ample provision for the education of all children” residing in Washington and to increase access to our state’s colleges and universities.

- **K-12 Education:** The state’s share for new construction and remodeling is fully funded. The average classroom teacher will receive \$458 for instructional materials which so often have to be paid for out of a teacher’s personal funds. Significant funding is provided for computers and other high technology classroom aids; learning improvement in reading, writing, math and communications; magnet schools and complex need programs; and alternative educational opportunities for students who have dropped out. The highly capable student program was enhanced by \$2.9 million. Our continued emphasis is for local control and accountability through assessment testing of children to ensure they are receiving a good education and retaining that knowledge.
- **Higher Education:** Financial aid for needy students is increased by \$32 million and enrollment is increased at the University of Washington by 455 student slots. The UW Bothell branch campus is funded for 210 more students. Bellevue Community College (BCC) will get an additional 204 students, Lake Washington Technical College (LWTC) will get 96 more students, and Renton Technical College is funded for 124 more students. For construction of classroom and laboratory facilities at BCC, \$9.7 million was approved, and LWTC will receive \$335,000 for needed repairs and minor improvements.

TRANSPORTATION BUDGET APPROVED, GAS TAX PROPOSAL NOT ENACTED

Because the 41st District suffers from severe highway congestion and has major transportation constructions needs, we would have benefitted greatly by the proposed gas tax increase to fund \$2 billion worth of projects. However, legislators heard the people on the gas tax and the bill was never brought to a vote. As a member of the Senate Transportation Committee, Jim helped to craft the final transportation budget.

The “no new revenue” budget adopted by the Legislature fully funds maintenance and preservation of the state’s highways, bridges and buildings. Safety is the budget’s first priority. A transfer of \$100 million from the state general fund will go for new projects to be selected by the Transportation Commission with priority given to projects supporting freight mobility, economic development and partnerships such as the SR 405/NE 44th Street Interchange corridor analysis (Renton Port Quendall Project), the SR 520 Translake Project, and repairs to the 520 floating bridge.

There will be an independent audit of the Department of Transportation to make sure gas tax dollars are being used wisely and there will be a thorough review of how motor vehicle excise tax (MVET) dollars are distributed. The MVET was enacted in 1937 as a personal property tax on automobiles to support public schools, but many feel the money should be used exclusively for transportation purposes.

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From SEN. JIM HORN, REP. IDA BALLASIOTES, REP. MIKE WENSMAN

“TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE TO NEEDY FAMILIES” REPLACES 60-YEAR WELFARE ENTITLEMENT

The Senate and House worked together on a joint bill to end welfare as an entitlement; limit cash assistance to five years; set a goal to reduce welfare caseloads by 15 percent in two years; make child care available so parents can work; and require teen parents to live in an approved adult setting.

All applicants for “temporary assistance” must be involved in a job-related activity (training, job search, community service) from the beginning. Recipients who work will be allowed to accumulate money and own a reliable car to help them stay off assistance when their income allows. The state will provide job training, child-care assistance, medical assistance, food, and subsidized employment to help people make the transition to independence. Applicants unable to find work will be assessed to determine their work and educational skills and needs, and a personal responsibility plan will be developed detailing the steps a person must take to become employed.

RESTORING JUSTICE AND RESPECT TO THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Again, the House and Senate worked together on a joint bill to make the long-overdue changes. Ida was a key player in the development of this comprehensive measure in her role as chair of the House Criminal Justice and Corrections Committee.

In our state and across the country, violent crimes have declined in recent years. The exception is juvenile crime, which has increased at an alarming rate. For example, 16-year-old juveniles now lead all age groups in the number of arrests for murder, burglary and vandalism.

Our current juvenile justice system adopted in 1977 is antiquated and no longer works. Kids have learned how to beat the system because the consequences of committing a crime are too few.

Under House Bill 3900, 16- and 17-year-olds would automatically be tried and punished in the adult justice system if they commit drive-by shootings, first-degree robbery and child rape, first-degree burglary with a previous conviction, and any crime in which the offender was armed with a firearm. Republicans and Democrats in both the House and Senate unanimously agreed with its final provisions.

Another part of the bill would mandate that any felony committed as a juvenile would be considered part of an adult’s criminal record. In addition, alternative sentencing options would be available for less serious offenders, including boot camps, home detention, community service, and mandatory alcohol and drug treatment. Other options include literacy programs, mentoring, earlier parental involvement, and we funded prevention programs. We made sure that those juveniles sentenced under the adult system would be housed separately in prison from adults.

The goal is simple: Every young offender who commits a crime will receive an appropriate sentence, whether it’s punishment or rehabilitation. HB 3900 was approved unanimously in both the House and Senate.

HOMEOWNERS AND EMPLOYERS TO RECEIVE SUBSTANTIAL TAX RELIEF

More than \$400 million in tax relief was approved this year, including a referendum to the people to make a permanent 4.7 percent cut in the state portion of the property tax and to impose a limit on property tax growth to the rate of inflation or 6 percent, whichever is lower. Value averaging allowing homeowners to spread an increased assessment of 15 percent or more over four years is also part of Referendum Bill #47.

In five years, the money saved from the 4.7 percent cut on a \$110,000 home will total \$350, after 10 years the savings will be about \$1,000 and after 30 years the savings will be \$8,000. The limit on tax increases will save the owner of a median-priced home about \$15,000 over the life of a 30-year mortgage.

The Legislature approved and the governor did sign into law a one-time 4.7 percent cut in state property taxes and a rollback of the business and occupation tax on service employers to pre-1993 levels. The B&O rollback takes effect July 1, 1998, and will save employers \$94 million in the next two years.

A key bill for employers is a measure sponsored by Jim which prohibits county assessors from taxing “intangibles.” It is a dangerous precedent to tax something that has no substance, something you cannot see, hear, touch or smell.

Sen. Jim Horn
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